

CLAIMS:

1. A transportable container for sealingly enclosing substrates, the container comprising:
  - 5           a) a box having an opening and receiving the substrates therein;
  - b) a removable closure member received by the box and capable of closing the box; and
  - c) a sealing gas introduction system temporarily having a source of a sealing gas to be introduced to purge an interior of the box.
- 10   2. The container as recited in claim 1, wherein the sealing gas introduction system including:
  - i) a vessel for holding the sealing gas previously;
  - ii) a gas supply line for supplying the sealing gas inside the vessel
  - 15       into the interior of the box; and
  - iii) a gas exhaustion line for exhausting a gas contained in the interior of the box.
- 20   3. The container as recited in claim 2, wherein the sealing gas inside the vessel is stored in a compressed condition at a predetermined pressure.
- 25   4. The container as recited in claim 2, wherein the sealing gas introduction system is supplied with the sealing gas from a gas supply source outside the container and stores the sealing gas in the vessel when the closure member is detached from the box, and
  - wherein the sealing gas introduction system introduces the sealing gas inside the vessel to the interior of the box when the closure member is attached to the box.
- 30   5. The container recited in claim 4, wherein the supply of the sealing gas to the sealing gas introduction system is started when the closure member is detached from the box, while the introduction of the sealing gas to the interior of the box is started when the closure member is attached to the box.
- 35   6. The container recited in claim 2, wherein the sealing gas introduction system is located within the closure member.

7. The container recited in claim 2, wherein the sealing gas introduction system is located on either of side walls, a top wall and a bottom wall of the box.

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8. The container recited in claim 1, further comprising:

d) a sealed space defined by a contact surface of the box and a contact surface of the closure member when the closure member is attached to the box; and

10 e) a pressure control system for maintaining a pressure of a gas inside the sealed space lower than a pressure of a surrounding environment outside the container.

15 9. The container recited in claim 1, wherein the sealing gas is selected from the group consisting of nitrogen, helium and argon.

10. The container recited in claim 1, wherein the container is a SMIF (standard mechanical interface) apparatus.

20 11. The container recited in claim 1, wherein the box adapted to store a cassette, the cassette capable of holding the substrates.

12. A transportable container for sealingly enclosing substrates, the container comprising:

25 a) a box having an opening and receiving the substrates therein ;  
b) a removable closure member for received by the box and capable of closing the box; and

c) an exhaustion system temporarily having a low pressure space whose pressure is lower than a pressure of a surrounding environment  
30 outside the container for exhausting a gas from an interior of the box by connecting the low pressure space to the interior of the box.

13. The container recited in claim 12, wherein the exhaustion system including:

35 i) a vacuum chamber in which the low pressure space is formed; and  
ii) a first line for connecting the vacuum chamber to the interior of

the box.

14. The container recited in claim 13, wherein the exhaustion system further including;

5           iii) a second line for connecting the vacuum chamber to a vacuum pump located outside the container; and

          iv) a third line for supplying external air to the interior of the exhausted box.

10   15. The container recited in claim 13, wherein the exhaustion system serves to lower a pressure inside the vacuum chamber when the closure member is detached from the box, and connect the vacuum chamber and the interior of the box when the closure member is attached to the box.

15   16. The container recited in claim 15, wherein the exhaustion system serves to start the exhaustion of the vacuum chamber when the closure member is detached from the box, and start the exhaustion of the interior of the box when the closure member is attached to the box.

20   17. The container recited in claim 13, wherein the exhaustion system is located within the closure member.

18. The container recited in claim 13, wherein the exhaustion system is located on either of side walls, a top wall and a bottom wall of the box.

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19. The container recited in claim 12, wherein the container is a SMIF (standard mechanical interface) apparatus.

20. The container recited in claim 12, wherein the box adapted to store a  
30   cassette, the cassette capable of holding the substrates.